United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1269
13 November 1992

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, tell Security Council that sanctions regime against that country is being evaded and violated; urge that arms embargo be maintained and enforced; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, announces convening of new high-level meeting to review humanitarian situation in early December; Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, says assistance to human rights victims should go hand in hand with punishing those guilty of violations; during debate, a number of delegates deplore the difficult situation in the former Yugoslavia; Council to resume consideration of item on Monday, 16 November.

+ Possibility of "eruption of a major conflict is high" in Georgia unless situation is reversed, says Secretary-General in letter to President of Security Council.

+ Mochtar Kusuma-Atmadja resigns as Chairman of Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission; Secretary-General appoints Nicolas Valticos of Greece as his successor, effective 20 November.

+ World Food Programme announces launch of four-month winter emergency operation to feed 1 million people, mainly in northern Kurdish areas of Iraq; appeals urgently for further aid pledges from donor community.

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Cyrus Vance, one of the two Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia, told the Security Council today that the sanctions regime established by the Council was being evaded and violated, and throughout the former Yugoslavia the humanitarian crisis deepened. It was common knowledge that transit documents were being misused and that embargoed oil was getting through in larger and larger quantities. With regard to the arms embargo, he said, it was his judgement that it should be maintained and enforced. A lifting of the arms embargo - as some had suggested -- would not contribute to a durable peace and would be counter-productive.

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Given the "complex and testing situation" in that region, he stressed, it would require the strongest resolve by the international community to bring about a durable cessation of hostilities. He emphasized that the international community could not accept a non-compliance with the guidelines outlined by the Security Council and the General Assembly to solve the problems in the region.

Mr. Vance spoke this morning as the first of a number of speakers to address a formal meeting of the Council concerning the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said the situation in former Yugoslavia continued to threaten international peace and security.

Mr. Vance also urged all parties in former Yugoslavia to cooperate with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) as it was carrying out its vital humanitarian and peace-keeping missions. Obstruction, harassment, and attacks on peace-keeping forces could not be tolerated by the world community, he said. With regard to the unconditional cease-fire recently declared by the military commanders of the three warring parties in Sarajevo, he said it was still too early to draw any conclusions, but all three parties were expected to live up to their commitments.

In his statement to the Council, Lord Owen, the other Co-Chairman of the Conference, pointed out that the joint effort by the European Community and the United Nations had brought the opposing parties in the former Yugoslavia together in a mostly constructive dialogue in two main areas -- the politicians over the future constitution and the military over a cessation of hostilities. The Conference's constitutional proposals made clear that there would not be a crude division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into three separate provinces, because such an arrangement would endorse ethnic cleansing.

Sanctions, he noted, often hit the innocent harder that the guilty, but they were the only peaceful weapon the world had. It was vital, he stressed, that the Council's resolution block the gaping holes in the current oil embargo. A vital aspect of the constitutional proposals was the powerful interlocking mechanisms for the reversal of ethnic cleansing. People who wished to return to their homes or land would be able to call on an Ombudsman for help in negotiating with local authorities and, need be, going to court. That process would take a decade or more to complete, but documents signed under duress taking away people's homes and land would become null and void, he stressed.

Turning to the military aspect of the crisis, Lors Owen indicated that it was not clear whether the latest cease-fire would hold, but the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be considerably eased if there was a cessation of hostilities. However, he noted, a cease-fire had political dangers. The Bosnian Serb frontline, established by force, risked becoming frozen de facto political boundaries. The present Bosnian Serb frontline had to be rolled back, he said, and the international community must demilitarize Sarajevo and free blockaded towns.

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It was also vital not to disavow the use of external force, he continued, noting that the no-fly agreement would not have been negotiated without United States President Bush being ready to enforce it. Lord Owen expressed the conviction that the international community should continue to apply steady, persistent pressure on the leaders of the former Yugoslavia in order to achieve progress in the peaceful resolution of the crisis in the area.

Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), announced this morning that her Agency intended to convene another high-level meeting in early December to review the humanitarian situation in former Yugoslavia, in all its aspects. The first meeting on a comprehensive humanitarian response to the crisis in the region was launched by the UNHCR at the end of July.

Mrs. Ogata recalled that the priorities of UNHCR were assistance for survival and admission to safety of those who were compelled to flee from war and persecution. She stressed the importance of the full deployment of the additional UNPROFOR troops to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilian populations, noting that the security conditions for the indispensable road convoys to Sarajevo - and to many other areas - remained fragile.

Condemning displacement of populations, she said ethnic cleansing was going on with groups of peoples fleeing daily in their desperate search for safety in central Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, she added, many refugees had difficulties in being admitted to Croatia, which already was carrying a tremendous refugee burden. She expressed the hope that refugees and displaced persons on all sides would eventually be allowed to return to their homes. The return of refugees is clearly both a humanitarian and a political endeavour, she said.

Mrs. Ogata also voiced her concern about the consequences of the sanctions imposed on former Yugoslavia, saying they should not "become a lethal weapon against the weak". She recalled that the Humanitarian Assistance Project in Serbia and Montenegro was estimated at some 97.3 million dollars, expressing her gratitude to the Sanctions Committee for helping UNHCR deliver assistance to over half a million refugees and displaced persons.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of the Commission on Human Rights, pointed out that "ethnic cleansing" had been first pursued by de facto the Serbian authorities in the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These practices could not even be prevented by the presence of UNPROFOR forces in the territory of Croatia under the control of Serbian troops. He noted that the Serbian population in the areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina was also a victim of discrimination and human rights' abuse. Although these acts should be condemned in their own right, they were not an element of systematic policy.

In light of the current situation, three kinds of activities had to be undertaken immediately, from the human rights point of view, Mr. Mazowiecki said: the closing of detention camps; the establishment of security zones for

humanitarian purposes in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the establishment of corridors for humanitarian supplies, particularly to the cities and areas under siege.

Drawing attention to the systematic human rights violations of the Albanian populations, he noted that discrimination and oppression were also affecting other ethnic minorities living in the former Yugoslavia, such as Hungarians, Croat, Slovak and Ukrainian populations in Vojvodina, as well as Muslims in Sandjak. Asssistance to the victims of such acts had to go hand in hand with the will to punish those guilty, he said, in particular the perpetrators of war crimes.

The Council continued the meeting this afternoon, hearing statements from a number of delegates deploring the situation in former Yugoslavia. The Council is scheduled to resume consideration of this item on Monday, 16 November.

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The situation in Georgia has dramatically worsened, increasing the possibility of the eruption of a major conflict in that region unless confidence in the peace-building process of the 3 September agreement is rebuilt. That assessment was offered by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, dated 10 November.

In his letter, the Secretary-General recommended to the Security Council that it call on the parties in Georgia to meet at the highest level without precondition to establish an effective cease-fire and to resume the peace process in line with the 3 September agreement. He proposed that the United Nations participate as an observer at such a meeting and as a facilitator to assist the parties in finalizing a peace settlement. Such a meeting, the Secretary-General wrote, could also consider the possible deployment of United Nations observers to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

In the meantime, he went on, two United Nations personnel had remained in Georgia to provide an initial United Nations presence. In addition, an integrated United Nations Interim Office would be opened this month at Tbilisi.

The letter reported that the recent developments appeared to have adversely affected the relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation and had hampered the efforts of President Boris Yeltsin to promote a solution. The Secretary-General stressed the urgency of a summit meeting among the parties involved to put the agreement of 3 September back on track.

A United Nations mission, headed by Antoine Blanc, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, visited Georgia from 13 to 16 October. It was the second visit of a United Nations mission to the country this fall.

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The resignation for personal reasons of Mr. Mochtar Kusuma-Atmadja as Chairman of the Iraq-Kowait Boundary Demarcation Commission was accepted "reluctantly and with deep regret" by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who appointed as his successor Mr. Nicolas Valticos, acccording to a press release issued today at Headquarters.

Mr. Valticos, a Greek national, has served previously as member and President of various international Tribunals, including the International Court of Justice as an ad hoc Judge and Commission of Inquiry. He is presently Judge at the European Court of Human Rights and First Vice-President of the Institute of International Law.

The Secretary-General expressed to Mr. Mochtar appreciation for his valuable contribution to the work of the Commission, and pointed out that, thanks to his leadership and experience, the Commission had succeeded in finalizing its work on the land boundary between Iraq and Koweit, thus completing the major portion of its task as foreseen by Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

Mr. Mochar, a national of Indonesia, was elected to the International Law Commission beginning his term of membership from 1 January, 1992. His resignation takes effect on 20 November.

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With current relief food stocks in Iraq running out, the World Food Programme (WFP) today announced that it will launch a four-month winter emergency operation to assist 1.2 million people throughout the country. With 49,000 tons of additional commodities needed, WFP appealed to the donor community to "urgently make further food aid pledges as well as ensure speedy delivery of the food to the affected populations".

According to WFP Executive Director Catherine Bertini, the advent of the winter season will put at risk more than a million destitute and vulnerable people, mainly mothers and children. In the northern Kurdish areas, relief supplies of food and fuel are expected to run out by the end of November. In the central and southern governorates there is enough food to last into December.

The Government of Iraq and the United Nations signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 22 October, covering humanitarian relief operations throughout the country until the end of March 1993. The WFP, despite the months of delay in renewing the Memorandum, has delivered a total of 150,000 tonnes of aid commodities to various groups in Iraq since the end of the Gulf war in early 1992.

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